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List 14

BECKMANN

COVER: WEATHER-VANE, LITHOGRAPH, 1946

From Max Beckmann, Day and Dream

15 Lithographs, signed by the artist

Limited edition of 100 copies. Published 1946

20. II. 1951.

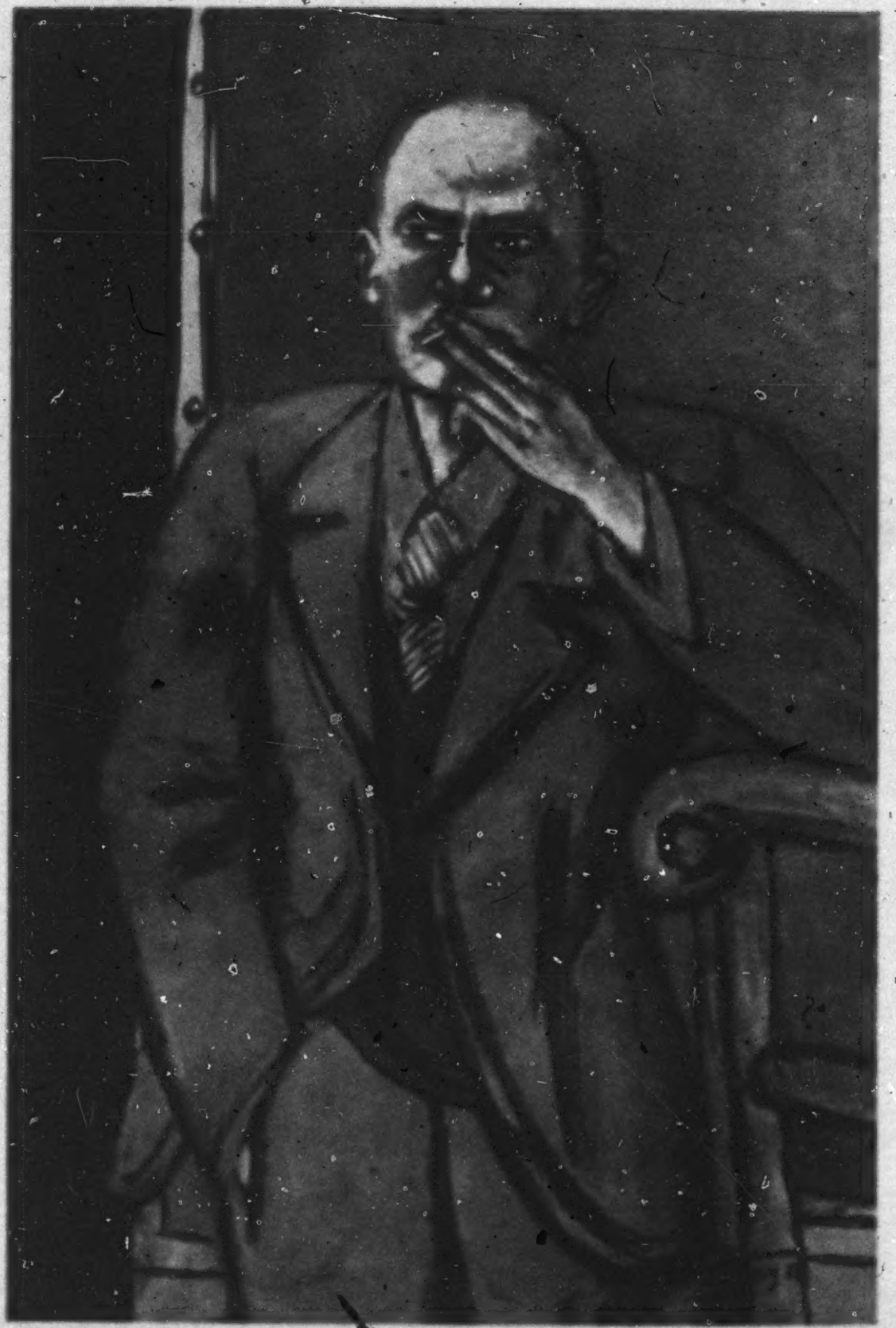
MAX BECKMANN

APRIL
3 – 28
1951

BUCHHOLZ GALLERY

CURT VALENTIN

32 EAST 57TH STREET · NEW YORK

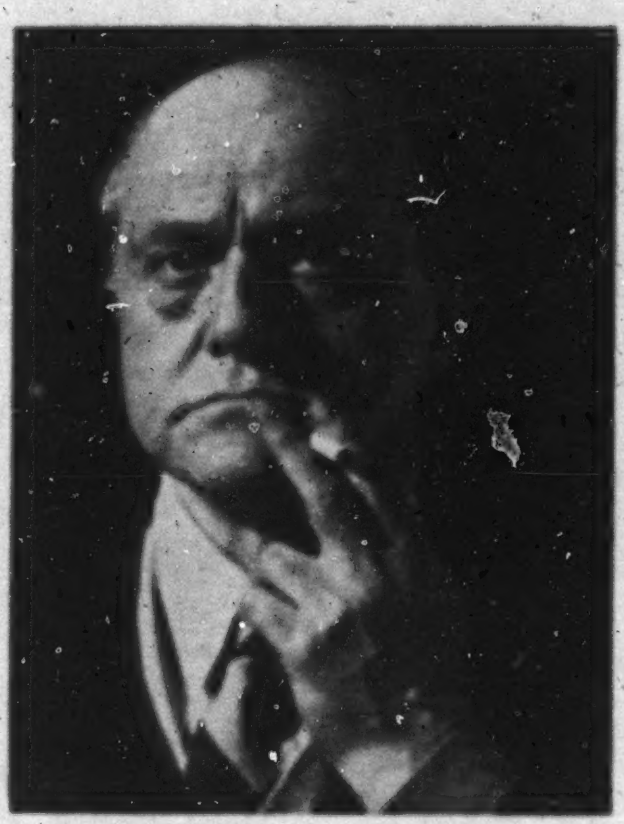


[6] *Self Portrait*

Max Beckmann

Born
February 12, 1884
in Leipzig, Germany

Died
December 27, 1950
in New York



DEAR FRIENDS, friends of Max Beckmann, how can I do justice to the memory of our departed friend? Honor him we do by our presence here. And you know in your hearts, as I do, that our silent presence speaks more deeply of our feeling for him than any poor words that I can summon. Yet we must find words, as much to comfort and solace our hearts as to honor our late beloved friend. We must do it with tenderness and sincerity, with warmth but not sentimentality, for that is how Max would have had it. That, in short, was his nature, the nature he reserved for his friends: tender and sincere, unsentimental but compassionate and warm of heart.

When I think of Max Beckmann I think of a monument, of a man who had the noble and elemental qualities of a rock: strength, integrity, endurance. He was a man uncompromising, intransigent, incapable of defeat by the destructive forces in life. Through all his years he has shown us what we could hardly believe possible: that a man could possess these qualities and live by them without thought of the

temptation to relax them, without thought of turning aside. How often he had occasion to do so! But like a towering monument he resisted the storms that have swept about him: the tempests of hostile criticism, the shattering experiences of two world wars, fascist denunciation, exile, and a life underground. Occasionally his solitary achievement has been rewarded by signal honors.

But it is not for his awards and honors that we revere Max Beckmann; it is for the man himself and for his great gifts so lavishly exercised that we love him: for the world he has uncovered, for the truth he has recognized, the light he has created, for the eyes he has given us and the understanding of life and its mysteries that he has imparted. As painter and poet, philosopher and friend, by his indefatigable labors, he has enriched our lives in a way that cannot be measured.

Max Beckmann was very much a dweller in this world. Its fantastic beauties enchanted him and received his affectionate regard by day and by night: the burgeoning of spring, trees in winter, the restless rivers, the surging ocean, the forms of men and animals. This visual life of nature he treasured beyond everything. He also saw and felt what was mean in life, and wicked, what was false and ignoble. And these things he felt compelled to unmask, to reveal in all their brutality, just as he felt compelled to exalt the harmony of this world. "I must look for wisdom with my eyes," he said. In this active, daily concern with good and evil, with beauty and ugliness lay Max Beckmann's philosophy of life. Both to him were part of existence; neither could be eluded. Only in these two elements together could he see a unity. But a release must be found. By his own statement Max Beckmann found that release in his painting. And paradoxically both elements became real to him only by his translation of them into paint.

But Max Beckmann found release in another way. He was an adventurer in other worlds than this one. He was fond of projecting himself beyond the limits of recorded time. With his powerful imagination, the life of the first dwellers on the earth was something real to him. Primitive man and his primitive environment, the evolving earth as it was before our time began were part of his life. He was a believer in lost continents and he was an explorer in the limitless space

that surrounds and mystifies us. Yet in spite of its infinity and mystery, the realm of the eternal was a familiar and friendly one to him. In one of his essays in letter form, he wrote not long ago:

"Perhaps we shall meet one day, alone or together. This we are forbidden to know. A cool wind beyond the other world will awake us beyond the dreamless universe, and then we shall see ourselves freed from the danger of the dark world, the glowing fields of sorrow at midnight. Then we are awake in the realm of atmospheres, and selfwill and passion, art and delusion are sinking down like a curtain of gray fog . . . and light is shining behind an unknown gigantic gleam."

Max Beckmann was a profoundly religious man, not that he was religious in any orthodox way. His belief like his art was a plastic thing, arrived at as a result of years of experience and reflection. He knew that there is a divinity that shapes our ends. Recently he told me this: "I have come to realize that Christ is everything."

Max Beckmann accepted the world as something limited, something wonderful and strange, but finite. He always understood that space and time were mysteries far beyond it, and that individual souls were the uttermost mystery of our existence. He had the gift of the poet to dream, and he felt himself in almost mystical communion with his departed heroes whose continuing life he never questioned. His visions were more real to him than reality. And he professed that he could only grasp, could only lay hold upon these intimations by the power and beauty of painting. My dear friends, that he did and that we know. But with his modesty he belittled himself as a master of words. And I turn, finally, to one of his most beautiful and touching statements:

"And then I awoke and yet continued to dream . . . painting constantly appeared to me as the one and only possible achievement. I thought of my grand old friend Henri Rousseau, that Homer in the porter's lodge whose pre-historic dreams have sometimes brought me near the gods. I saluted him in my dream. Near him I saw William Blake, noble emanation of English genius. He waved friendly greetings to me like a super-terrestrial patriarch. 'Have confidence in objects,' he said, 'do not let yourself be intimidated by the horror of the

world. Everything is ordered and correct and must fulfil its destiny in order to attain perfection. Seek this path and you will attain from your own Ego ever deeper perception of the eternal beauty of creation; you will attain increasing release from all that which now seems to you sad or terrible.'

"I awoke and found myself in . . . the midst of a boundless world turmoil. But my belief in the final release and absolution of all things, whether they please or torment, was newly strengthened. Peacefully I laid my head among the pillows . . . to sleep, and dream, again."

Perry T. Rathbone

New York
December 29, 1950

NOTES ON THE TRIPTYCH "ARGONAUTS" FROM MAX BECKMANN'S DIARY

Max Beckmann's last work, the triptych "Argonauts," began with the left panel as a single painting called "The Painter and His Model." As conceived as a triptych the original title was "The Artists" which subsequently became the "Argonauts."

St. Louis

Apr. 19, 1949 *Rather peaceful day; morning was to School – first sat around in studio.*
– suddenly –
"The Painter and His Model" could be a wonderful picture.

New York

Sept. 25, 1949 *Pushed Painter and Model pretty far.*

Apr. 12, 1950 *Worked all day. Lay-out finished for center panel of "The Artists."*

Aug. 24, 1950 *Right panel for "The Artists" well composed. During afternoon worked much in color on "San Francisco" – difficult problem.*

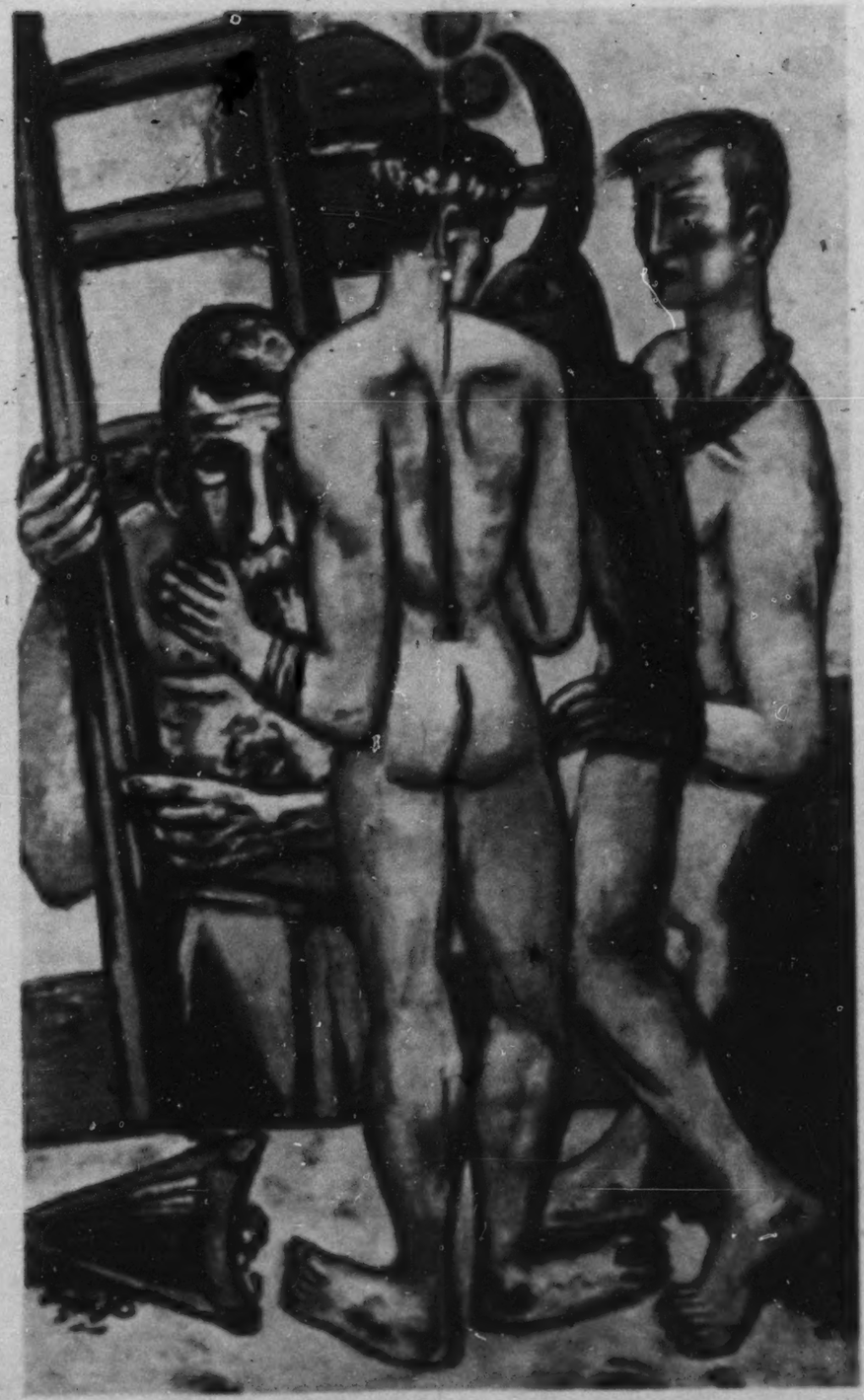
Sept. 22, 1950 *Worked hard all day on right panel of "Artists"; only went out in the evening for ten minutes.*

Sept. 27, 1950 *Began "Still Life with Pigeons."*

Oct. 5, 1950 *Three hours in afternoon on center panel of "Artists."*

Oct. 8, 1950 *Still fiercely on center panel of "Artist."*

Oct. 21, 1950 *Worked rather in vain on center panel – except for the even pink sky – hm – annoying – despite fussing with it all day. Took a walk only in the evening.*



The Argonauts

Oct. 23, 1930 *Worked with satisfaction on center panel for first time this afternoon. Three hours – beautiful – sweated hard – but – it's coming along!!!*

Oct. 27, 1930 *"Still Life with Pigeons"* finished – *one day?*

Nov. 2, 1930 *In the morning (after return from School) solved problem of left figure in center panel "Artists" – started to work in color.*

Nov. 6, 1930 *Labored hard in afternoon on center panel, decised blue coat. Tomorrow perhaps, it will be decided.*

Nov. 7, 1930 *"The Artists": old figure in blue finished – also worked long on the over-all composition this morning.*

Nov. 10, 1930 *Large singing figure on right panel is pretty good – newly finished.*

Nov. 13, 1930 *– worked well on Pigeon still life. Center panel – always consoling.*

Nov. 19, 1930 *Sent out Pigeon Still Life, Seals stay here. Later, at home finished foreground loin cloth of old man in "Artists" . . . Feel wretched and tired – what is it all for?*

Nov. 26, 1930 *Busy Sunday. Much accomplished, right panel of "Artists" nearly and finally.*

Nov. 28, 1930 *– and "Artists" almost finished – ? So am I.*

Dec. 9, 1930 *Nights dream of Argonauts!*

Dec. 13, 1930 *Worked all day which I really didn't want to do. Still on the "Argonauts." Well, maybe I have strengthened it.*

Dec. 16, 1930 *Twelve hours on head of boy at right of Argo – What madness.*

Dec. 17, 1930 *Four hours on that ridiculous head of "Argonauts."*

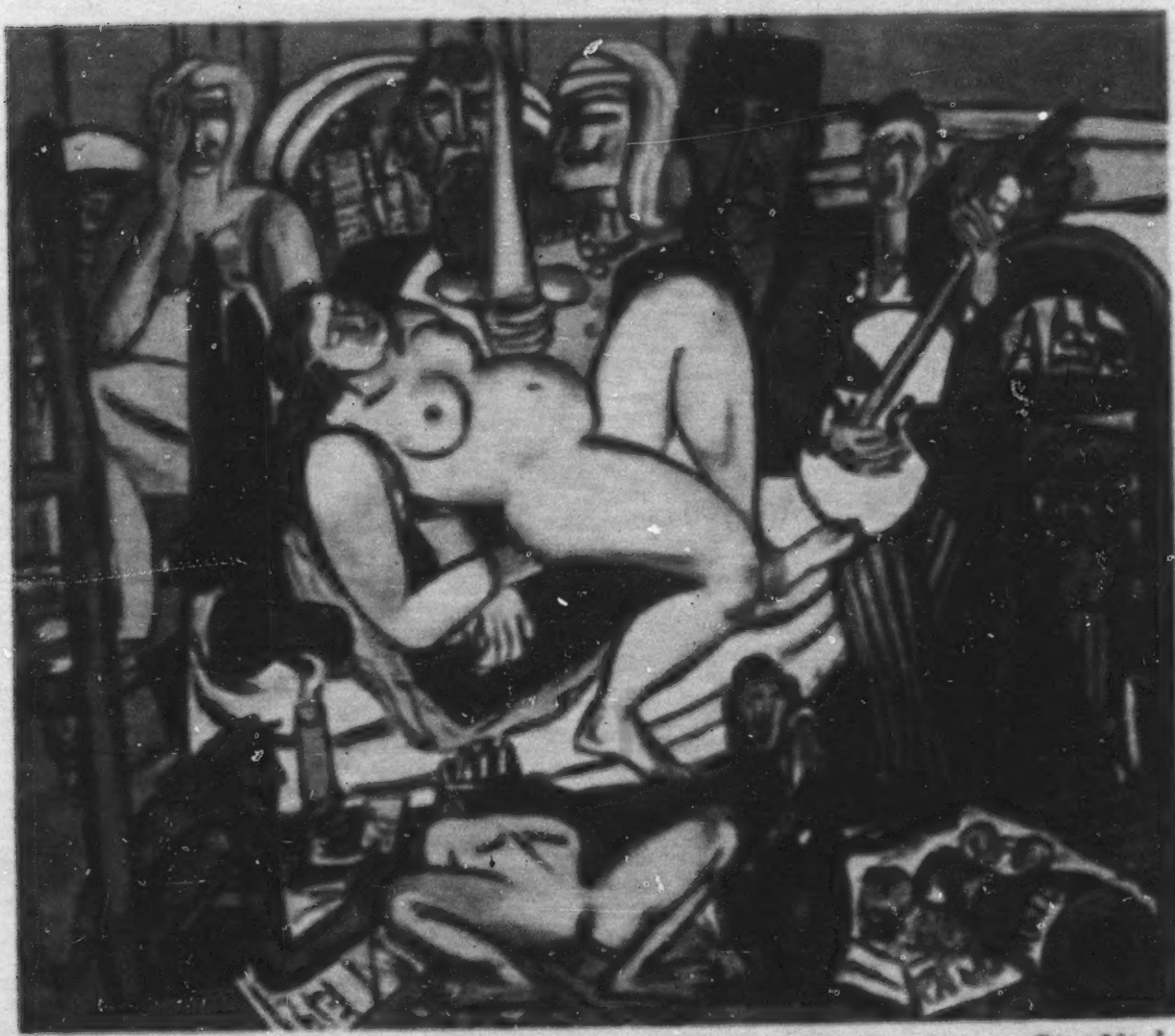
Dec. 18, 1950 *Again new head at right of "Argonauts."*

Dec. 23, 1950 Worked, *Seals and head of "Argonauts" – damn it –*

Dec. 24, 1950 *I am dead tired – in the morning final (?) touches on "Argonauts."*

Dec. 26, 1950 *Snow falls, worked all day long, and again on the "head."*

Shortly before midnight of that day, he showed his wife the *"Argonauts"* and said: *"Yes, now it is good, it was worth it. Now I won't make another brush stroke on it – at last I've got it."* *Translation by J. S.*



City Night

[1] *Still Life with Musical Instruments*

[5]

Dreaming Girl

[13] *Falling Man*

[17] *The Green Clown*

[2] *Studio Corner*

[8] *Bird Vendor*

CATALOGUE

PAINTINGS 1950

[1] *Still Life with Musical Instruments*
36 x 55"

[2] *Studio Corner*
30 x 24"

[3] *Lilies*
30 x 24"

[4] *Birds of Paradise*
30 x 24"

[5] *Dreaming Girl*
36 x 55"

[6] *Self Portrait*
55 x 36"

[7] *Three Women*
30 x 24"

[8] *Bird Vendor*
30 x 24"

[9] *San Francisco*
40 x 55"

[10] *California Park*
55 x 24"

[11] *Watermill*
55 x 24"

[12] *City Night*
64 x 74"

[13] *Falling Man*
55⅛ x 35"

[14] *Still Life with Pigeons*
40 x 50"

[15] *The Argonauts*
center panel: 80 x 48"
side panels: 74⅛ x 33"

[16] *Sea Lions*
71 x 26"

[17] *The Green Clown*
30 x 30"

[18] *Backstage*
40 x 50"

SCULPTURE

[19] *Head*
Bronze. 1950
Height 5¾"

[20] *Back Bend*
Bronze. 1950
Height 9"

[9] *San Francisco*

PAINTINGS BY MAX BECKMANN OWNED BY AMERICAN MUSEUMS

University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Begin the Beguine 1945

Albright Art Gallery
Buffalo, New York

Hotel Lobby 1950

Busch-Reisinger Museum
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Self Portrait in Tuxedo 1927

Stephens College
Columbia, Missouri

Bridge in Holland 1945

Blanden Art Gallery
Fort Dodge, Iowa

Festival of Flowers 1947

Wadsworth Atheneum
Hartford, Connecticut

Variety 1934
Self Portrait with Green Scarf 1947
Sacrificial Meal 1947
Sleeping Woman 1948
Beginning triptych 1949
(On extended loan from
Adelaide Milton de Groot)

Iowa State University
Iowa City, Iowa

Carnival triptych 1948

The Museum of Modern Art
New York, New York

Family Picture 1920
Departure triptych 1932-35
Still Life with Candle 1949

Norton Gallery of Art
Palm Beach, Florida

Blue Iris 1948

Portland Museum of Art
Portland, Oregon

The Mill 1947

City Art Museum
St. Louis, Missouri

Young Men by the Sea 1943

Washington University
St. Louis, Missouri

Four Men around the Table 1943

University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

Beasties 1947